THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Quarters in Minto Road Railway Colony are more than 50 years old but are being maintained in satisfactory living condition.

(c) Seventeen inspections of this colony have been done at Officer's level in the last one year. In addition Colony Care Committee headed by the Officer in charge and involving staff representatives has reviewed the maintenance in 5 meetings during the year.

(d) Repairs to the colony are already being done as per requirement.

Crane scam

†2173. SHRI BHAGWATI SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of media report regarding a crane scam related to his Ministry;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto alongwith steps taken or being taken to check such scams in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Media report had appeared in the Hindi newspaper 'The Navbharat Times' on 18th, 19th and 20th July' 2005 under the heading 'Crane Scam-I, II and III'.

(c) No action is contemplated on the above media report since on levelling of allegations regarding irregularities in the procurement of the above cranes in Parliament, the then Hon'ble Minister of Railways Kum. Mamta Banerjee in 2000 had entrusted the detailed investigation into the entire affair to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Moreover the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi where a writ petition on the above procurement was filed, had disposed off the same pending CBI

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

investigations. CBI after detailed investigation did not find any irregularity in the procurement and enquiry was closed by them.

Containing wasteful expenditure on railway infrastructure

2174. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken or proposed to be taken for containing wasteful expenditure on railway infrastructure in the country since last two years; and

(b) the details of measures taken or proposed to be taken for making railway profitable?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) It has been a constant endeavour on the part of the Railways to avoid wasteful expenditure and control the growth of the non-plan expenditure. The Railways have been taking a number of austerity/economy measures such as improving staff productivity by better man-power planning, asset utilization, inventory management, fuel consumption etc. to keep the expenditure under control.

Apart from above measures, efforts are also being made to make Railways financially more viable by increasing the earnings. In this regard, the initiatives under freight business segment include plans to improve throughout through increased productivity and efficiency, reduction in wagon turn around time, simplification and rationalization of preferential traffic schedule, electrification of diesel sidings, engine-on-load scheme, terminal incentive scheme, introduction of electronic payment gateway facility, simplification and rationalization of goods tariff, new premium registration scheme, wagon investment scheme, development of private sidings through cost sharing, integrated warehouse complexes, etc. Initiatives under passenger and parcel business segments include extension of PRS and UTS facilities to more and more locations, speeding up of trains, review of trains with low patronage, deployment of additional coaches in well patronized trains, additional leasing of parcel space in certain nominated trains, leasing of vacant compartment of guard in front of SLR coach, etc. These measures are likely to enhance earnings of the Railways and make it more profitable.